

Wall Street protesters speak out: “America is long overdue for a revolution”

A reporting team
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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to many of those who joined Wednesday’s mass demonstration against Wall Street.

Sean Charls, age 24, a bank employee, joined the demonstration after leaving work in lower Manhattan.

“It’s about time, America is long overdue for a revolution,” he said. “Historically since the American Revolution, there hasn’t been a movement that everyone has been so passionate about. A lot of people are really hurting right now, and nothing is being done about it. Instead they are being stabbed in the back by the people who are in charge. Isn’t democracy supposed to be “government by the people, for the people”?

“This is a world issue, like the demonstrations in Egypt and the Middle East. The signs are clear that things have to change. Protests are spreading to other US cities, but the media isn’t covering it as much as they did the protests in the Middle East and Europe. They don’t want to show that the same things are happening here.”

Sean said that his job had taught him how banking works. “They don’t care about you if your account balance is only \$1,000,” he said. “You’re not profitable to them, so they are charging more and more fees. Debt dictates whether or not you can feed your family these days. The banks aren’t giving out any loans. The government doesn’t pay its debts, but say working people have to pay theirs.”

Amber Niedomys, a student at Indiana University in Pennsylvania, told the WSWs, “I came here today with three others to support the cause because more numbers have more impact. I think that the unions being here is a very important step because of everything that happened with the unions. We didn’t fight to get decent wages, benefits and working conditions to give them up now. A turn toward the working class is important because inequality between the classes hasn’t been this bad since the nineteenth century.

“Certain people have gotten in power and abused that role. Instead of serving the people, they serve themselves. And this includes the CEOs.

“Obama had a platform representing the working people, but he hasn’t lived up to that. He hasn’t stopped the wars that he promised. He has shot more missiles than all of the Nobel Peace Prize winners combined.

“I am a student. I go to a public university, and the cost of my

tuition is going up, and the quality of education is going down. I probably have \$30,000 in debt. I am pursuing an art education major, but they are cutting the arts programs in all the schools in Indiana. Then the starting salaries are very low, so I don’t know if I will be able to pay back my loans and support myself. All the jobs around Indiana are minimum wage jobs. I hope this motivates people so they can change things.”

Lou Campagna, a graphic designer from the East Village in New York City, explained, “I’m here to show discontent with the current economic system. The banking system needs to be held responsible for their reckless practices, like the mortgage securitization crisis, and the general financial alchemy they engage in. And I think the wealthy and corporations need to pay more taxes. Trickle-down economics does not work.

“That the banks and corporations are sitting on two trillion dollars is immoral. The Americans were graceful enough to bail them out with taxpayers’ money. In return, they did not treat the American people with grace. I think this is a form of class warfare where the poorer you are the higher the cost you pay to access your own money. While the banks were given the money interest free. They are doing nothing to help out struggling Americans.”

Pete Merando voiced support for the demonstration, “I am a self-employed auto mechanic, and have had my own shop for over 30 years. I am from Ringwood, New Jersey, and I came because I want to be a part of this movement. I was watching it on TV at home, and I was so excited by it, I just had to take part in it. I am so mad at the way things are going right now.”

Ricardo Adams is a construction worker who has been laid off for over two years. He came to the demonstration with his baby daughter from Rochester, New York. “The unions aren’t protecting us,” he said. “They are letting the teachers be let go from the schools so the parents have to step in. The teachers’ union hasn’t done enough to defend the teachers. The teachers feel unprotected so that if they say anything they are scared. This is what it is all about today. The business model is privatization. With all the right-wing criticism of Obama, they never criticize him for his ‘Race to the Top’ education program. Why? Because they are pushing charter schools, privatization, and testing by private corporations.

“I believe the way democracy is meant to work is not the way

things are working now. The two-party system does not represent the people. There should be a working class party that represents the working people in more than name. This should have been going on since the Supreme Court decided corporations were people. We should occupy Wall Street. We should occupy Washington, DC. We should shut everything down.”

Ralph Mitchner said that he made a living buying and selling violins. “It is enough to pay my rent,” he said. “Wall Street has taken control of the world. Wall Street is made up of looters. It is a looters’ economy. Over the counter derivatives is gambling with other people’s money, and the government pays off their gambling debt. They should just take the losses. Wall Street controls the government. They say ‘jump’, and Obama says ‘how high?’ High finance does not serve any productive purpose. We have degenerate capitalism. The Democrats are a failed choice. They want to fool people that they are different. Can you imagine Obama running on the slogan ‘change you can believe in’? Corporations want to make America like a third world country so they can make monstrous profits. I opposed the war in Libya. It is a war for empire over-reach. They wouldn’t be there if it wasn’t for the oil. I read the WSWS. I love it; it is one of the few truth-tellers.”

Carolyn Ramos was on the steps of the Department of Education protesting with other students before joining the larger march at Foley Square. She is a student at University Heights High School, which was forced to move off the Bronx Community College campus where it had been part of a program to encourage students in a low-income neighborhood to go on to college. This had been a result of insufficient funding for building educational facilities for both lower and higher educational public institutions.

She explained why she joined the protest: “Both of my parents are on welfare, without enough money to afford college for me. Now I hear the president is trying to cut medicaid, welfare, housing, and more. So how can my family grow up together if everything is being cut. I think all the budget cuts should stop. There should be more resources for the schools.”

Matt, a student from Montclair State University in New Jersey, said: “Today I came out because of student loan debt, because there are a lot of students who can’t afford it. There are so many reasons to come out against what is going on, because Wall Street is causing so many problems.

“Some Democrats pledge to support for Occupy Wall Street, but they just want votes. The problems are bipartisan. The Republicans take 10 percent more corporate money than the Democrats but it’s a non-issue. The corporations buy politicians.”

Rachelle Suissa, from south Brooklyn, graduated from Brooklyn College recently with a masters in political science, but has been unable to find steady work. “I worked on a campaign after I got out of school, but since then I’ve been

unemployed,” she said. “I got an adjunct position at Brooklyn College but that is very problematic.”

She said that she needed a steady income to help support her mother, who is retired on a pension and Social Security, which does not meet her expenses, and a grandmother who is in a nursing home.

“It’s not working out for people like us,” she said. “It’s very unfortunate. They keep giving money to big banks and corporations, but do nothing for people who really need help. It’s really hit me below the belt financially. Our government needs to do something. I thought that with my degree I would get a job with a non-profit or a government agency. It’s very disappointing and very depressing.”

Junior Martinez and Renee Crethers have participated in the occupation at Zuccotti Park. He is a student in graphic design at Borough of Manhattan Community College and she is completing her GED at the Harvey Milk Institute.

“I came to support this movement,” said Junior. “I’ve been coming down to the occupation for a week now. I don’t sleep over, but I stay till about 3 or 4 in the morning.

“I would like to see real economic and political change come out of this. I don’t think that they are doing much at all for people like us. They are spending money in all the wrong places. They should be spending it on education.”

Renee said that she was disappointed with the Obama presidency. “I feel that he might have made a small effort at the beginning, but it is not enough,” she said. “They are giving more money for military aid than they are for school aid.

“There are so many things that are wrong. Why are we suffering, when we are the people who worked to build this country, not the monopolies, which should be illegal.

“We are the future, and if we want to survive and live, we have to do something about the present.”



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